

Message Text

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ACTION ARA-20

INFO OCT-01 ISO-00 CIAE-00 DODE-00 PM-07 H-03 INR-10 L-03

NSAE-00 NSC-10 PA-04 RSC-01 PRS-01 SPC-03 SS-20

USIA-15 MC-02 ACDA-19 IO-14 TRSE-00 AID-20 DRC-01

/154 W

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R 152130Z JAN 74

FM AMEMBASSY LIMA

TO SECSTATE WASHDC 8446

INFO AMEMBASSY BOGOTA

AMEMBASSY BRASILIA

AMEMBASSY BUENOS AIRES

AMEMBASSY CARACAS

AMEMBASSY LA PAZ

AMEMBASSY QUITO

AMEMBASSY SANTIAGO

USCINCSO

C O N F I D E N T I A L LIMA 0362

USCINCSO FOR POLAD

EO 11652: GDS

TAGS: PARM, PE

SUBJECT: REACTION TO PERU*IAN ARMS MORATORIUM SUGGESTION

REF: LIMA 229 (NOTAL)

1. SINCE PRESIDENT VELASCO'S JANUARY 9 PRESS CONFERENCE, WHEN HE SUGGESTED THE POSSIBILITY OF A MEETING OF PERU AND ITS NEIGHBORS TO DISCUSS AN ARMS MORATORIUM (REFTEL), THE PRESS HAS WIDELY REPORTED THE GENERALLY FAVORABLE REACTION FROM THE NEIGHBORING CAPITALS. A NUMBER OF EDITORIALS HAVE APPEARED IN BOTH THE PRO-GOVERNMENT AND INDEPENDENT PAPERS PRAISING VELASCO'S STATESMANLIKE "INITIATIVE" AND POINTING TO THE DESIRABILITY OF DEVOTING SCARCE RESOURCES

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TO ECONOMIC AND SOCIAL DEVELOPMENT RATHER THAN TO EXPENSIVE WEAPONRY. OFFICIAL REACTION, BOTH PRIVATE AND PUBLIC, HAS

BEEN LIMITED, HOWEVER.

2. AMBASSADOR HAD RECENT OCCASION TO ASK FONMIN DE LA FLOR WHETHER HE BELIEVED SUBJECT OF ARMS LIMITATION MIGHT BE DISCUSSED AT FORTHCOMING FOREIGN MINISTERS MEETING IN MEXICO. DE LA FLOR REPLIED THAT AGENDA FOR COZUMEL MEETING IS MORE OR LESS FIXED AND HE DOUBTED IT WOULD BE POSSIBLE TO INTRODUCE THIS FAR-REACHING MATTER. FONMIN DID INDICATE THAT PROPOSAL OF MEETING OF PERU AND ITS NEIGHBORS HAS BROADER IMPLICATIONS, ESPECIALLY SINCE NEIGHBORS HAVE TO CONSIDER ARMS LIMITATION IN RELATION TO THEIR OWN NEIGHBORS (E.G. ARGENTINA AND VENEZUELA). DE LA FLOR ALSO SUGGESTED THAT PERHAPS PRINCIPAL ARMS SUPPLIERS SUCH AS U.S., USSR, UK, PRC, FRANCE, ITALY AND NETHERLANDS SHOULD AGREE ON MEANS WHEREBY THEY WOULD LIMIT SALES ON BASIS OF PERCENTAGE OF GNP OF PROSPECTIVE BUYERS. HOWEVER, HE AGREED WITH AMBASSADOR'S COMMENTS THAT NOT ONLY WOULD THIS BE DISTASTEFUL TO PURCHASING STATES BUT ALSO THAT IT WOULD BE DIFFICULT TO HOLD LINE BECAUSE OF COMPETITIVE NATURE OF ARMS BUSINESS.

3. PRIMIN MERCADO IS ONLY RANKING GOP OFFICIAL SO FAR TO COMMENT PUBLICLY ON MORATORIUM PROPOSAL. HE POINTED OUT THAT FAVORABLE REACTION FROM LEADERS OF NEIGHBORING COUNTRIES HAS BEEN REPORTED IN THE PRESS BUT THAT OFFICIAL SUPPORT FOR PROPOSAL MUST BE EXPRESSED THROUGH DIPLOMATIC CHANNELS. HE EXPRESSED HOPE THAT FOREIGN MINISTRY WOULD ESTABLISH THE NECESSARY MECHANISMS TO RECEIVE SUCH SUPPORT. MERCADO SAID THERE WERE VARIOUS OPTIONS POSSIBLE FOR TAKING UP ARMS LIMITATION SUBJECT, INCLUDING MEETINGS OF HEMISPHERE FOREIGN MINISTERS, IN OAS, AND PERHAPS, AS PRELIMINARY STEP, IN SUB-REGIONAL AND REGIONAL MEETINGS OF FOREIGN MINISTERS.

4. COMMENT: EMBASSY BELIEVES THAT VELASCO'S PRESS CONFERENCE REMARKS ABOUT AN ARMS MORATORIUM, IF NOT EXTEMPORANEOUS, DID NOT CONSTITUTE A CAREFULLY CONSIDERED GOP POSITION. PERUVIANS PROBABLY HAVE BEEN SURPRISED AT SWIFTNESS OF FOREIGN REACTION AND ARE ONLY NOW PREPARING DIPLOMATIC STEPS REQUIRED IN FOLLOW THROUGH. MERCADO'S STATEMENTS REGARDING OPTIONAL COURSES IS EVIDENCE OF THIS. WE WILL BE LOOKING AT ATTITUDES OF WORKING-
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LEVEL FONOFF OFFICIALS TO SEE WHETHER ARMS MORATORIUM CONSTITUTES SERIOUS INITIATIVE. MORE IMPORTANTLY, WE WILL BE ALERT FOR REACTION WITHIN ARMED FORCES AS PROPOSAL CONCEIVABLY COULD SLOW THE SUBSTANTIAL MODERNIZATION PROGRAM NOW UNDERWAY.

5. DEPARTMENT MAY ALSO WISH TO CONSIDER WHETHER IN CONNECTION WITH THE GOP'S RECENT PURCHASE OF SOVIET TANKS VELASCO'S PROPOSAL CONSTITUTES A NEW ELEMENT WHICH MIGHT BE USED APPROPRIATELY TO DISSUADE GOP FROM MAJOR NEW ACQUISITIONS FROM THAT SOURCE.

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Message Attributes

Automatic Decaptioning: X
Capture Date: 01 JAN 1994
Channel Indicators: n/a
Current Classification: UNCLASSIFIED
Concepts: PRESS COMMENTS, MEETING AGENDA, ARMS CONTROL MEETINGS, FOREIGN MINISTERS MEETINGS, MILITARY SALES
Control Number: n/a
Copy: SINGLE
Draft Date: 15 JAN 1974
Decaption Date: 01 JAN 1960
Decaption Note:
Disposition Action: RELEASED
Disposition Approved on Date:
Disposition Authority: golinofr
Disposition Case Number: n/a
Disposition Comment: 25 YEAR REVIEW
Disposition Date: 28 MAY 2004
Disposition Event:
Disposition History: n/a
Disposition Reason:
Disposition Remarks:
Document Number: 1974LIMA00362
Document Source: CORE
Document Unique ID: 00
Drafter: n/a
Enclosure: n/a
Executive Order: GS
Errors: N/A
Film Number: n/a
From: LIMA
Handling Restrictions: n/a
Image Path:
ISecure: 1
Legacy Key: link1974/newtext/t19740141/aaaabmpw.tel
Line Count: 116
Locator: TEXT ON-LINE
Office: ACTION ARA
Original Classification: CONFIDENTIAL
Original Handling Restrictions: n/a
Original Previous Classification: n/a
Original Previous Handling Restrictions: n/a
Page Count: 3
Previous Channel Indicators: n/a
Previous Classification: CONFIDENTIAL
Previous Handling Restrictions: n/a
Reference: LIMA 229 (NOTAL)
Review Action: RELEASED, APPROVED
Review Authority: golinofr
Review Comment: n/a
Review Content Flags:
Review Date: 06 SEP 2002
Review Event:
Review Exemptions: n/a
Review History: RELEASED <06 SEP 2002 by cunninfx>; APPROVED <09 DEC 2002 by golinofr>
Review Markings:

Declassified/Released
US Department of State
EO Systematic Review
30 JUN 2005

Review Media Identifier:
Review Referrals: n/a
Review Release Date: n/a
Review Release Event: n/a
Review Transfer Date:
Review Withdrawn Fields: n/a
Secure: OPEN
Status: NATIVE
Subject: REACTION TO PERU*IAN ARMS MORATORIUM SUGGESTION
TAGS: PARM, PE, XM, US, UR
To: STATE
Type: TE
Markings: Declassified/Released US Department of State EO Systematic Review 30 JUN 2005